

Movies

A Winning Portrait of Loss in Iraq

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Although at times tedious and repetitive, "Meeting Resistance" is nonetheless an important journalistic document about the Iraqi insurgency -- its roots, motivations and methods. Polished art it isn't, but it is a remarkable piece of war reporting, taking us behind enemy lines, as it were, to provide insights into why Operation Iraqi Freedom turned so quickly to bitterness, blood and ash.

Two daring photojournalists-turned-filmmakers -- Steve Connors and Molly Bingham, who now live in Washington -- introduce us to an array of Iraqis involved in fighting the American occupation, including some with military backgrounds but no love for the old regime. We come to know them as nuanced, credible people, even if we never really see their faces.

Eight pseudonymous insurgents (e.g., "The Wife," "The Teacher," "The Warrior") are often rendered in soft focus and silhouette, or kept off camera so that we see only their hands, prayer beads and smoldering cigarettes. This presents a cinematic and narrative challenge; the filmmakers usually rise to it. Through often-chilling interviews, the Iraqis, both Sunni and Shiite, (and one Syrian) detail why they've taken up the anti-American cause, for religious, nationalist or purely personal reasons.

Of all the miscalculations U.S. leaders made about [Iraq](#), this documentary underscores perhaps the most significant one: We underestimated the obdurate strength of Iraqi pride and patriotism. As long as you dare to occupy our homeland, these voices say, we will fight you -- to the death.

The film could be better-paced, and tighter overall, but it's understandable if Connors, a former British soldier, and Bingham, an experienced war-zone journalist who also once served as official photographer in the office of Vice President [Al Gore](#), felt that history deserved an expansive record. The pair gathered film for 10 months in northern Baghdad's [Adhamiyah](#) district, where [Saddam Hussein](#) last appeared publicly as the city fell. They conducted interviews through May 2004, after which it became too dangerous for them (and their subjects) to continue meeting.

While some may wish to tar Connors and Bingham as enemy propagandists or enablers, their work is journalism at its most noble. They got the other side of the story.

Meeting Resistance (84 minutes, in Arabic with English subtitles, at AMC Loews Dupont) is not rated. It contains war-related violence.